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# Canada's Action Plan on **OPEN** Government

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## Introduction

Canada's commitment to open government is part of the federal government's efforts to foster greater openness and accountability, to provide Canadians with more opportunities to learn about and participate in government, to drive innovation and economic opportunities for all Canadians and, at the same time, create a more cost-effective, efficient and responsive government.

“The Government of Canada remains committed to fostering the principles of open government by putting forward this Action Plan. It offers Canadians greater opportunities to learn about and participate in government, in the economy, and in our democratic process.”

The Honourable Tony Clement,  
President of the Treasury Board of Canada

The Government of Canada first launched its Open Government strategy in March 2011, and then further enhanced its commitment by announcing its intention to join the Open Government Partnership in September 2011.

Over the past two years, we have consulted Canadians on both the development of a Digital Economy Strategy and on Open Government. Our Digital Economy consultation sought feedback from all Canadians on how to improve innovation and creativity, and achieve the shared goal of making Canada a global leader in the digital economy. More recently, in the fall of 2011, we launched a consultation to explore Canadians' perspectives on Open Government in order to inform the development of Canada's Action Plan on Open Government.

The results of these consultations stressed the importance of providing open access to public sector information and data and, in particular, the need to improve the availability of data to researchers and the private sector with fewer restrictions on reuse of these information assets. Canadians also want the opportunity to engage in an ongoing dialogue with government on policies and priorities. Cumulatively, the valuable information and insight received from Canadians have helped us shape the direction for open government in Canada. As we move forward, we will continue to consult with Canadians and Canada's active open government community on how best to implement this plan.

Our Action Plan on Open Government sets out our commitments to Canadians and for the Open Government Partnership, which we will achieve over a three-year period through the effective and prudent use of resources. It is structured along the three streams of our Open Government Strategy: Open Information, Open Data, and Open Dialogue.

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## The Evolution of Canada's Open Government Strategy

Historically, Canada has been a world leader in making information available and in being accountable to its citizens. Government of Canada legislation, policies, and practices have consistently advanced transparency and openness. Major advancements have included:

- ▶ **1977 – Privacy Commissioner:** appointment of Canada's first Privacy Commissioner to protect and promote the privacy rights of individual.
- ▶ **1983 – *Access to Information Act*:** Canada became one of the first countries to enact federal access to information legislation almost three decades ago.
- ▶ **1983 – Information Commissioner:** appointment of the first Information Commissioner in Canada to ensure that individuals' rights to information under the *Access to Information Act* are respected and that government operates within a culture of transparency and fairness.
- ▶ **1983 – *Privacy Act*:** legislation enacted to place limits on the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information, and provides Canadians the right to see and correct personal information the Government of Canada holds on them.
- ▶ **2003 – Proactive Disclosure:** began publication of information on government operations to allow Canadians and Parliament to better hold the Government and public sector officials to account.
- ▶ **2005 – *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act*:** legislation enacted to give federal public sector employees a secure and confidential process for disclosing serious wrongdoing in the workplace and protection from acts of reprisal.
- ▶ **2006 – *Federal Accountability Act*:** Government of Canada brought forward specific measures to help strengthen accountability and increase transparency and oversight in government operations.
- ▶ **2007 – Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner:** first appointment of agent of Parliament to help appointed and elected officials prevent and avoid conflicts between their public duties and private interests.
- ▶ **2007 – Public Sector Integrity Commissioner:** appointment of the first Public Service Integrity Commissioner to enable public servants and the general public to disclose wrongdoings committed in the public sector.
- ▶ **2008 – Commissioner of Lobbying:** agent of Parliament first appointed to ensure transparency and accountability in the lobbying of public office holders in order to increase the public's confidence in the integrity of government decision-making.
- ▶ **2011 – Open Government Initiative:** on March 18, 2011, the Government announced its commitment to an open government initiative along three main streams: open information, open data, and open dialogue.

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- ▶ **2011 – Open Data Pilot Project:** launched an Open Data Portal – data.gc.ca – which now has more than 272,000 datasets from 20 departments and which has already resulted in over 100,000 dataset downloads since its launch.
  - ▶ **2012 – Access to information Request Summaries:** all departments are now publishing summaries of completed ATI requests monthly on their websites.
  - ▶ **2012 – Modernized Values and Ethics Code** - the Government issued its enhanced Values and Ethics Code of conduct for all public officials.

## Canada's Action Plan on Open Government

Canada's Action Plan on Open Government is focussed on key commitments that will advance our work over the next three years along our existing three streams of activity and in alignment with the core principles of the OGP and the three Grand Challenges we have selected to address. The Action Plan has been informed by consultations with citizens across the country, members of civil society, the private sector, key federal departments and agencies, and other levels of government – as reflected in our [Open Government Consultation Report](#).

Canada's long standing culture of transparency and accountability has allowed us to propose commitments for our Action Plan that build upon a solid foundation already in place and which align with the Open Government Partnership's principles:

- ▶ **Availability of Information:** Canada's track record in Access to Information since 1983 demonstrates that we are committed to ensuring that Canadians access information about their government's activities and decisions in an open, comprehensive and timely manner. All federal departments and agencies are required to proactively disclose travel, hospitality, and conferences expenses, as well as contracts, grants and contributions, summaries of completed ATI requests, and quarterly financial statements of federal organizations.
- ▶ **Citizen Participation:** The online consultations we have conducted reflect that the government values public participation and seeks to engage citizens in public dialogue that will inform the policy creation process and contribute directly to more responsive, innovative and effective governance.
- ▶ **Professional Integrity:** Our track record on proactive disclosure and on the creation of independent Agents of Parliament confirms our commitment to robust government accountability with high ethical standards, with a strong code of conduct for public officials, for robust anti-corruption policies as well as for the existence of mechanisms to ensure transparency in the management of public finances. The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service, a condition for employment, acts as a guide to all public servants in all their professional activities, as well as Conflict of Interest and Post Employment Measures, serving to maintain and enhance public confidence in the integrity of Canada's world-class Public Service.

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- ▶ **New Technologies for Openness and Accountability:** Our initial work with Web 2.0 technologies has already confirmed the promise of these technologies for enhancing accessibility and transparency by enabling greater information sharing, public dialogue and collaboration. As we move forward with our Open Government Action Plan, we will seek to leverage them further.

Finally, we have brought further focus to the development and selection of specific commitments within our Action Plan by seeking to address three Grand Challenges:

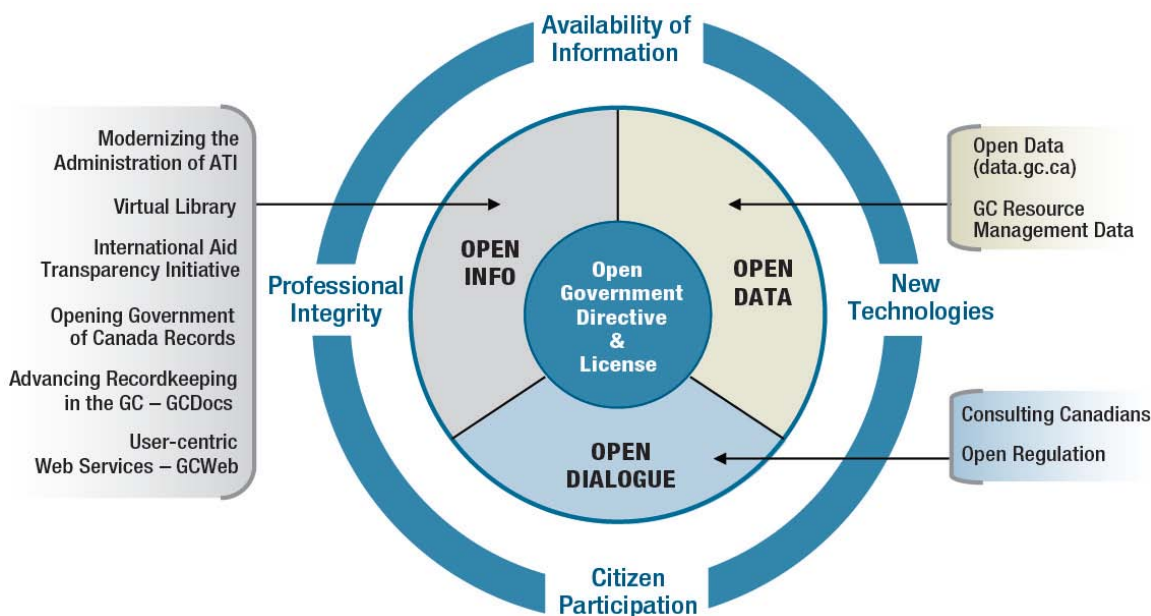
- ▶ **Increasing Public Integrity** – Building on our achievements to date in this area, we believe we can continue to introduce measures that will further strengthen access to information, public ethics, and public participation;
- ▶ **Improving Public Services** – Canada has long been a leader in service delivery, and we are proposing new measures that address improvements to the full spectrum of citizen services through Web 2.0 technologies.
- ▶ **Effectively Managing Public Resources** – Canada has worked hard to maintain its solid fiscal posture, which today is the envy of many countries, and will continue to pursue measures that address the proactive release of information on government finances and foreign assistance.



## Our Commitments

The diagram below synthesizes the twelve commitments included in our first Action Plan on Open Government and reflects their alignment with Canada’s Open Government Strategy. At the core are two commitments considered foundational to the success of our overall Open Government Strategy.

The remaining ten commitments further the strategy along the three streams of activity and in alignment with the four OGP principles. Each of the twelve commitments is described below.



## Foundational Commitments

We have two foundational commitments for the Open Government Action Plan.

- ▶ **Open Government Directive:** In Year 1 of our Action Plan, we will confirm our policy direction for Open Government by issuing a new Directive on Open Government. The Directive will provide guidance to 106 federal departments and agencies on what they must do to maximize the availability of online information and data, identify the nature of information to be published, as well as the timing, formats, and standards that departments will be required to adopt. Our ongoing consultations with our Open Government Advisory Panel will inform the development of the Directive. Moving forward in Years 2 and 3, we will progressively implement the Directive in order to establish consistency and standard practices with regard to open publishing across government departments and agencies. The clear goal of this Directive is to make Open Government and open information the ‘default’ approach.

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- ▶ **Open Government License:** To support the Directive and reduce the administrative burden of managing multiple licensing regimes across the Government of Canada, we will issue a new universal Open Government License in Year 1 of our Action Plan with the goal of removing restrictions on the reuse of published Government of Canada information (data, info, websites, publications) and aligning with international best practices. In developing this new license we will also coordinate with other OGP members to allow more seamless collaboration across borders. The purpose of the new Open Government License will be to promote the re-use of federal information as widely as possible. It is our goal that federal departments will have adopted this new universal Open Government License by the end of Year 2 of the Action Plan.

## Activity Stream 1 – Open Information

We define this stream of activity to include specific support for Open Information: proactively releasing information on government activities on an ongoing basis, making it more accessible to Canadians and easier to find. There are six commitments in this stream.

- ▶ **Modernizing the Administration of Access to Information:** To improve service quality and ease of access for citizens, and to reduce processing costs for institutions, we will begin modernizing and centralizing the platforms supporting the administration of Access to Information (ATI). In Year 1, we will pilot online request and payment services for a number of departments allowing Canadians for the first time to submit and pay for ATI requests online with the goal of having this capability available to all departments as soon as feasible. In Years 2 and 3, we will make completed ATI request summaries searchable online, and we will focus on the design and implementation of a standardized, modern, ATI solution to be used by all federal departments and agencies.
- ▶ **Virtual Library:** To simplify access to a range of government information available to the public in Year 1, we will begin the design of an online searchable repository of published Government of Canada documents of all kinds (e.g. publications, consultant reports, ATI summaries, government research, presentations, white papers, etc.). Moving forward in Years 2 and 3, we will launch this Virtual Library through a pilot which will provide public access to federal publications and documents via a single window. Public input will be sought throughout this pilot to make sure that the Virtual Library reflects the needs of citizens.
- ▶ **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI):** The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) will make information about Canadian aid spending easier to find, use, and compare. Transparency is key to fostering accountability which is a hallmark of Canada's tradition in providing international aid. Those involved in aid programs will be able to better track what aid is being used for, and what it is achieving, helping us to ensure that each dollar goes as far as possible toward stated goals. In Year 1, we will review all IATI requirements

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and publish our plan to make information about the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) activities available and accessible, and in Years 2 and 3, we will focus on implementation and reporting. As a result, donors, partner countries, civil society organizations and citizens will be able to access and use Canadian information and compare it with the data from other participating organizations and countries.

- ▶ **Opening Government of Canada Records:** The Government of Canada archives contain a wealth of documentary heritage, and it is important that Canadians have access to this information. In Year 1 of our Action Plan, we will increase access to archived federal documents held by Library and Archives Canada by removing restrictions on this information wherever possible, thereby ensuring ongoing access to the preserved historical record of the Government of Canada. Additionally, in Year 1, we will issue new mandatory policy to drive consistent document classification practices across the federal government to reduce the volume of classified documents in the future. In Years 2 and 3, we will work with departments to progressively make the classified documentation already held within the archives of the Government of Canada available online through Web 2.0 platforms and in formats accessible on mobile devices where possible.
- ▶ **Advancing Recordkeeping in the Government of Canada – GCDocs:** To support the implementation of recordkeeping policies and directives, and an advanced government-wide recordkeeping regime, we will establish a hosted government-wide solution for records and documents management to service government departments and agencies. During Year 1, we will deploy wave one of an enterprise solution for electronic record and document management across a number of departments. Building on lessons learned, in Years 2 and 3, we will pursue deployment across the federal government.
- ▶ **User-Centric Web Services – GCWeb:** Throughout our consultations with Canadians, it became clear that a more organized and accessible web presence for the Government of Canada is a key enabler for openness and transparency. To facilitate access to the wealth of information and services available to Canadian through the Web channel, we are committed to the development of an approach for a new user-centric, consolidated web presence for the Government of Canada within the first year of our Action Plan. In Years 2 and 3, we will initiate the implementation of this new platform, which will include a one-stop, federated search window to government information to provide simultaneous searching of federal web pages, data, and publications.

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## Activity Stream 2 – Open Data

We define this stream of activity as making raw data available in machine-readable formats to citizens, governments, not-for-profit and private sector organizations to leverage it in innovative and value-added ways. There are two commitments in this stream.

- ▶ **Data.gc.ca:** During the recent public consultations on the Digital Economy Strategy and Open Government, Canadians called for open data to be made available in more usable and accessible formats. Building on the successful open data pilot launched in 2011, we will implement the next generation platform for the delivery of open data. Over the past year, we have expanded the number of non-geospatial data sets available from 800 in April 2011, to more than 11,000 in April of 2012. When geospatial datasets are included, the total comes to more than 272,000 unique data sets. During Year 1 of our Action Plan, we will continue to expand on the number of datasets made available through the existing portal, and we will complete our requirements for the next generation platform. In Years 2 and 3, we will design and initiate implementation of the new data.gc.ca portal, as well as further improve the level of standardization of data published by departments. The Government will make use of crowdsourcing, particularly among Canada's open data community, to make sure that this new open data portal meets the needs and expectations of those who will use it most, and provides the best possible opportunity to support entrepreneurs eager to make use of Government of Canada data.
- ▶ **Government of Canada Resource Management Data:** To fulfill its statutory responsibilities, the Government collects resource allocation and performance management information from all departments and agencies; not all of this information is currently provided online, nor is it easily searchable across departments. Through this initiative starting in Year 1, the government will use information collected from federal organizations to publish resource management and performance data through the open data portal. Years 2 and 3 will build on usage and feedback to provide enhanced search and data visualization tools.

## Activity Stream 3 – Open Dialogue

We define this stream of activity as giving Canadians an opportunity for two-way dialogue with the Government of Canada on federal policies and priorities. There are two commitments in this stream.

- ▶ **Consulting Canadians:** To simplify access and participation in online consultations by Canadians, we will explore options in Year 1 for the development of a new Web 2.0 citizen engagement platform that federal organizations can use to conduct public consultations. Also in Year 1, we will develop a standard approach to the use of social media and Web 2.0 by federal departments to augment their engagement activities with citizens and businesses, as well as pilot a crowdsourcing initiative to involve Canadians in developing ideas and solutions for greater online dialogue and engagement on public policy initiatives. In Years 2 and 3, we will enable the use of common online tools to support engagement activities.

- ▶ **Open Regulation:** To increase public engagement on regulatory activities in Year 1, federal regulators will be required to electronically post their forward regulatory plans so as to make the regulatory system more predictable and give Canadians and businesses early warning of upcoming changes and the opportunity to engage on regulatory plans. Regulators will also be required to post service standards and policies that clarify when stakeholders can count on receiving guidance in writing. In Years 2 and 3, we will continue to simplify engagement activities to support more efficient and responsive regulatory activities, including posting annual scorecards on streamlining administrative burden.

### Summary of Action Plan Commitments by Grand Challenge

INITIATIVE		OGP Grand Challenges		
		Increase Public Integrity	Improve Public Services	Effectively Managing Public Resources
FOUNDATION	Open Government Directive	◆		
	Open Government License		◆	
OPEN INFORMATION	Modernizing the Administration of Access to Information	◆		
	Virtual Library		◆	
	International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)			◆
	Opening Government of Canada Records	◆		
	Advancing Recordkeeping in the GC – GCDocs			◆
	User-centric Web Services – GCWeb		◆	
OPEN DATA	Open Data (data.gc.ca)		◆	
	Government of Canada Resource Management Data			◆
OPEN DIALOGUE	Consulting Canadians	◆		
	Open Regulation			◆

## Conclusion

Canada is committed to Open Government and is ready to be an active participant in the Open Government Partnership. We support the principles of the Open Government Partnership which we believe will propel innovation, economic opportunity and deeper democratic engagement worldwide.

Within Canada, the Open Government Partnership provides us with a real opportunity to accelerate the transformation of our public service and of our government through a fundamental openness to working with Canadians coupled with the effective use of emerging technologies. The commitments included in our Action Plan on Open Government, along with the other

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activities underway across the federal government that align with and promote the principles of Open Government, will accelerate our progress on the delivery of programs focussed on the needs of Canadians and result in more responsive and cost-effective services. Our success will be measured by the impact our measures will have on the engagement of Canadians and the use they make of our open information, open data and open dialogue. We welcome the opportunity to share our experiences with partner countries and leverage the lessons we can learn from others.